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ABSTRACT

Quiet signs and verbal cautioning by library staff do not decrease library noise levels as revealed by two tests using sound measuring equipment at San Joaquin Delta College. The levels in fact increased, confirming previous opinions that signs and staff intervention have little effect on patron behavior. Test methods, data, and five references are included. (RAA)

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Research Project

THE "ROAR OF CHATTER" IN THE LIBRARY

AT

SAN JOAQUIN DELTA COLLEGE

A proposal submitted to the faculty of the University of San Francisco in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Science in Human Relations and Organizational Behavior

By

Richard B. Evans

December 13, 1979

HROB 93

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DISCLAIMER STATEMENT

The opinions, results and conclusions of this report are those of the author as a student at the University of San Francisco and do not necessarily reflect those of San Joaquin Delta College or the University.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Tobin Clarke, Chairperson of Learning Resources and her staff for their assistance and cooperation in this research project.

To Lisa Bracamonte, special thanks for her attention to detail and time in the taking of noise level readings and counting of people the many times required for completion of this research project.

To Ron Payne, my instructor, my heart felt gratitude. His understanding, patience and encouragement as a teacher and a friend helped me greatly in the pursuit of my education, personal growth and completion of this project.

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Introduction

Our college library has rapidly become one of the last places a person would go for peace and quiet to study or read. Efforts have been made by the library staff via a public address system to hold the noise down. Some patrons were asked to leave because they were using the library as a social gathering place. This did not help and the library staff continues to receive complaints from students and teachers about the noise level. In the addendum are two articles that were printed in the college newspaper, further indicating that something needs to be done about the noise level in the library.

In an article with no author (1979), it was indicated that noisy patrons in many libraries are becoming more of a problem. Complaints have been growing, and more libraries have found it necessary to respond to the problem. In this article, the solution was the establishment of quiet rooms for patrons who want to block out the noise.

This research project was designed to test other techniques which might solve the noise level problem in our college library. The hypothesis tested was that through the use of signs and library staff, the noise level could be controlled to an acceptable level. The prediction was that signs reading (QUIET PLEASE) will

lower the noise level. A combination of the signs in addition to the library staff reminding patrons to be quiet will lower the noise level even further, and return the library to a quiet facility for study and reading.

Peter Jordan (1974) indicates that the library staff has little effect on patron behaviour in making the library quieter and that most of the noise which disturb patrons came from the library staff. This information was gained through an observation exercise. We felt the opposite, that staff influence does effect patron behaviour in making the library quieter. While our research used the (QUIET PLEASE) signs as a major tool, this same article stated that the classic "Silence" notice is seldom seen in libraries because they are ineffective.

The use of signs is further encouraged in a position paper by Nazir Ahmad (1975) who stated that visible signs are additional help in ensuring an atmosphere of seriousness and quiet in the library. By the same token, Mary Gregory (1975) said not to put any forbidding signs up at all.

There does not seem to be anything other than opinions or observations in the area of noise control in the libraries. There is no evidence of any controlled research in this area. The use of signs as a tool to

control noise levels is disputed by some and hailed by others. The question of whether staff can control the noise level remains to be seen as thus far, there is no solid evidence either way. Our controlled research should be very useful in resolving these questions and hopefully finding some answers to methods of solving the noise problem.

Method

Two test periods of three weeks each were used for study. One three week period during the spring semester, and one three week period during the summer semester. In week one, baseline sound levels were read during normal business hours. Week two, sound levels were taken with fifty signs reading (QUIET PLEASE) placed on all tables and any other place where library patrons congregate. During the third week, sound level readings were taken again, with the signs remaining in place and in addition, the library staff was instructed to tell library patrons when they were being noisy. A copy of the memo to the staff is included in the addendum. which gives direction to the staff on this part of the project. The sound level readings for the two, three week periods were taken three times a day; ten a.m., twelve noon, and two p.m.. All sound level readings were taken from the exact same location, facing the meter in the same direction for each reading.

All sound level readings were taken using a Triplett Sound Level Meter, model 370 and were recorded on a log with date, time, and number of persons present in the library.

Results

The statistical mean for noise level (db) and people for each week is indicated in the table on the following page. This table shows the two test periods, each with the three treatments and the conditions.

A "F" statistic was performed between weeks 1vs2vs3vs4vs5vs6; df_w=5; df_{bet}=66; p=.05; F=16.55 which was significant. A "F" statistic was performed between weeks 1+6vs2+5vs3+4; df_w=2; df_{bet}=69; p=.05; F=3.59 which was significant. A "F" statistic was peformed between weeks 1vs2vs3; df_w=2; df_{bet}=34; p=.05; F=.89 which was not significant. A "F" statistic was performed between weeks 6vs5vs4; df_w=2; df_{bet}=32; p=.05; F=24.03 which was significant. A "t" statistic was performed between weeks 1+2+3vs4+5+6; df +70; t =4.904 which was significant. A "t" statistic was performed between weeks 1+6vs3+4; df =45; t =2.57 which was significant. A "t" statistic was performed on weeks 2+5vs3+4; df =45; t =.28 which was not significant. A "t" statistic was performed on weeks 1vs2; df =26; t =.65 which was not significant. A "t" statistic was performed on weeks 1vs3; df =20; T =1.20 which was not significant. A "t" statistic was performed on weeks 2vs3; df =22; t =1.05 which was not significant. A "t" statistic was performed on weeks 6vs5; df =20; t =6.54 which was significant. T "t" statistic was

performed on weeks 6vs4; df =23; t =6.06 which was significant. A "t" statistic was performed on weeks 5vs4; df =21; t =.65 which was not significant. A "t" statistic was performed on weeks 1vs6; df =68; t =4.78 which was significant. A "t" statistic was performed on weeks 5vs2; df =23; t =6.49 which was significant. A "t" statistic was performed on weeks 3vs4; df =20; t =6.49 which was significant. An ANCOV test adjusting the means for differences in numbers of people present in the library, showed even more signficance of "F". (Adjusted means df =5.0; deviation from regression df =81.75; difference between means F =75.21.)

	Baseline	Signs	Signs/Staff
First Period	Week (1) 51.38 db 43.15 People	Week (2) 52.13 db 43.86 People	Week (3) 53.00 db 43.88 People
Second Period	Week (6) 46.53 db 17.5 People	Week (5) 48.80 db 22.3 People	Week (4) 52.25 db 25.15 People

TABLE 1

Discussion

Our hypothesis agreed with Nazir Ahmad (1975) that signs are a help in ensuring an atmosphere of seriousness and quiet in the library. Our research results support Mary Gregory (1975) by showing that signs are not effective in reducing noise level. As can be seen in the table on the previous page, comparing week one to week two of either test period, the noise level went up, indicating that the signs did not help in decreasing the noise level as hoped they would. As further evidence of this, comparison of weeks 1vs2, "t" was not significant, meaning there was only a very small change if any in the noise level. In the second test period, weeks 6vs5, "t" was significant, noise levels rose greatly in the week signs were used.

In the first test period, it was interesting to note that there was little change in the number of people present but the noise level still went up. In the second test period the second week noise level increased greatly over the first week even though there was an increase of less than an average of five people for the week.

Our research results determined that Peter Jordan (1974) was correct in saying he found little evidence of direct staff influence on patron behaviour in keeping the

noise down. Looking again at the table, it can be seen that the sound levels in week three of both test periods is higher than any other week within the same test period. In comparing weeks 1vs3, the "t" was not significant, showing there was little or no change in noise level. In comparing weeks 6vs4, the "t" was significant showing an increase in noise level from the baseline to the week of the staff being used as a noise control tool.

In the first test period, the noise level increased by 2.62db which is almost double the noise level from the first week while the average count of people was up less than one. In the second test period, the noise level increased by 4.72db which is more than two and a half times the noise level of the first week and the average count of people went up by only eight people. Comparing the two test periods using an ANCOV test was significant, showing that the spring semester patrons were much quieter than the summer semester patrons. In comparing the third week of the two test periods, the spring semester patrons while having an average of almost nineteen more patrons in the library only raised the noise level by less than one db.

While the results of our research show that our corrective actions did not work, in a study of reading performance in an open school by Carol and Neil Weinstein (1979) it was found that noise does not effect

performance except a slight tendency to work more slowly.

As a result of what has been learned by this research project, erecting noise barriers as suggested in the article with no author (1979) could hold more or better solutions to solving the noise problem in our college library than signs or staff control.

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Learning Resources
May 25, 1979

To: The Library Staff

From: Tobin Clarke TC

Re: Dick Evans' Research Project

As you may have already guessed, asked, or been told, Dick Evans is involved in a research project measuring the noise level in the library and relating increases and decreases to various factors. A copy of the project is on file in the office.

Next week he will be in a phase which will require all of your cooperation. He has asked me to remind you to set a good example "by whispering or talking at very low levels and to make users aware that they are to be quiet when reminders are necessary. Thank you very much."

TC/ph

The "roar of chatter"

Editor:

Late yesterday morning a "roar of chatter" could be heard the entire length and width of our campus library, possible reaching the ears of those in adjourning buildings. Upon first entering, one would have immediately assumed that a full scale party was in progress. Those few who came for a quiet study or, at least, unconfused meditation, gave up and abandoned the idea. This was quite a disappointment to behold as this very subject had recently been published in the college newspaper in a letter to the editor. However, when the noise reached its peak, a stern voice over the loud speaker intercepted and insisted upon silence. She also stated that students would be asked to leave if more of the same were to continue. Silence was enjoyed for two whole precious minutes; then the noise resumed in full force. Nothing was further announced over the loud speaker, nor did the "stern voice" back up her threats by removing the talkative students.

Name Withheld
By Request

IMPACT 3/9/79.

Letter to the Editor IMPACT 2/9/79

Noisy libraries; record ripoffs

Editor:

I recently came to this school as a new student to Delta College. I am presently in my last semester, just about to graduate in June with my A.A. degree. I have 17 units this semester and this takes lots of quiet study hours of my time.

I have two children at home and this makes it difficult for me to study there, so I prefer to use our library here on campus. I have found, however, that this does not solve my problem of quiet study time.

The library here seems to be a social meeting place with lots of noise and chatter from my fellow students. The students seem to have no regard for people who are interested in doing their homework.

I would like to suggest that if students want to socialize, why don't they go to the cafeteria? The library staff seem to ignore the whole situation. Maybe we should go back to grammar school rules where people are asked to leave if they are talking?

There have been some attempt to solve this problem. Partitions have been put on the tables to separate the students from one another. This, however, has not worked, for the students now stand around in groups and talk at normal level, not even bothering to whisper. My question is, what can we do to prevent this from recurring?

Jill Nichols